

Chapter 1. Introduction



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Background

Located in the mountainous north coast region of California (Figure 1-1), Headwaters Forest was acquired by the Secretary of Interior and the State of California on March 1, 1999, to preserve the last unprotected large stand of old-growth redwood forest. Unique ecological values of the forest include

- a highly intact, functioning old-growth forest ecosystem that has very large old-growth redwood and Douglas-fir trees,
- a high diversity of plant species in the forest understory,
- nesting of threatened marbled murrelets and northern spotted owls, and
- undisturbed headwater stream habitat for threatened coho and chinook salmon and steelhead trout.

The federal legislation authorizing acquisition of the forest

- established a specific boundary and points of access,
- called for joint federal-state acquisition, with management by the federal government and an easement to guarantee conservation management granted to the state, and
- established the requirement for the development of a management plan.

The acquisition was part of a comprehensive agreement between the Department of Interior (USDI) and Pacific Lumber Company (PALCO) that created a natural reserve – the Headwaters Forest – and required PALCO and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to complete a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for PALCO’s remaining lands in Humboldt County (200,000 acres). The HCP provides a mechanism under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for PALCO to “take” listed species in the course of their timber operations (Section 10). Monitoring of marbled murrelet populations and watershed conditions in the pristine habitats of the Headwaters Forest is called for in the HCP to provide baseline information for understanding effects of timber

management on PALCO's remaining lands. The HCP states that the "... primary benefit to the murrelet associated with the proposed project is the public acquisition of the Headwaters Forest . . . arguably the most important parcel of habitat in private ownership in the 3-state range of the marbled murrelet" and notes that it is being placed "... under permanent protection". The acquisition was the pivotal conservation measure of the HCP. Also, as part of this HCP, the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) issued a 2081 permit to PALCO that allow "incidental take" of listed wildlife species on PALCO's remaining lands, which was also an integral part of the overall strategy for acquisition of the Headwaters Forest and protection of threatened and endangered species inhabiting it. The HCP states that "... approximately 20 years after issuance of the incidental take permit, marbled murrelet habitat on the property (private) would be at its lowest expected amount, mostly confined to the uncut old-growth and residual stands . . ." At that time, the Headwaters Forest would contain 35% of that habitat.

The specific 7,472-acre tract acquired includes 3,088 acres of unharvested redwood groves surrounded by 4,384 acres of previously harvested forest and brushlands. The U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is charged with management of the Headwaters Forest Reserve (Reserve), and the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) represents the state's interests in Reserve management. The Deed of Conservation Easement for the state interest conveys to the state an oversight responsibility to ensure that "all human activities with the Headwaters Forest shall be consistent with the stated goals and purposes of (the Act)", and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by BLM, DFG, and the California Secretary for Resources directs the management agencies to plan and manage the Reserve for its "fish and wildlife habitat and other ecological values as full cooperating partners".

Purpose of and Need for Management Plan (Project Objective)

The federal legislation authorizing the Reserve (1998 Interior Appropriations Bill) directed the Secretary of Interior to prepare a long-term management plan for its management. It established the following management goal for the plan:

"conserve and study the land, fish, wildlife, and forests occurring on such land, while providing public recreation opportunities and other management needs."

This document is the required management plan. It has been jointly developed by BLM and DFG to provide direction for future management actions.

The need for the plan is to assure that human activities are compatible with the ecological integrity and preservation of the Reserve's lands, fish, wildlife, and forest. As required by the authorizing legislation (see Chapter 2), the plan addresses requirements for species management, the conduct of research and monitoring activities, public access, provision of minimal facilities, and a management budget (Chapter 4). In particular, it addresses watershed and forest restoration actions that are needed to protect and promote long-term ecological integrity and provide conservation management.

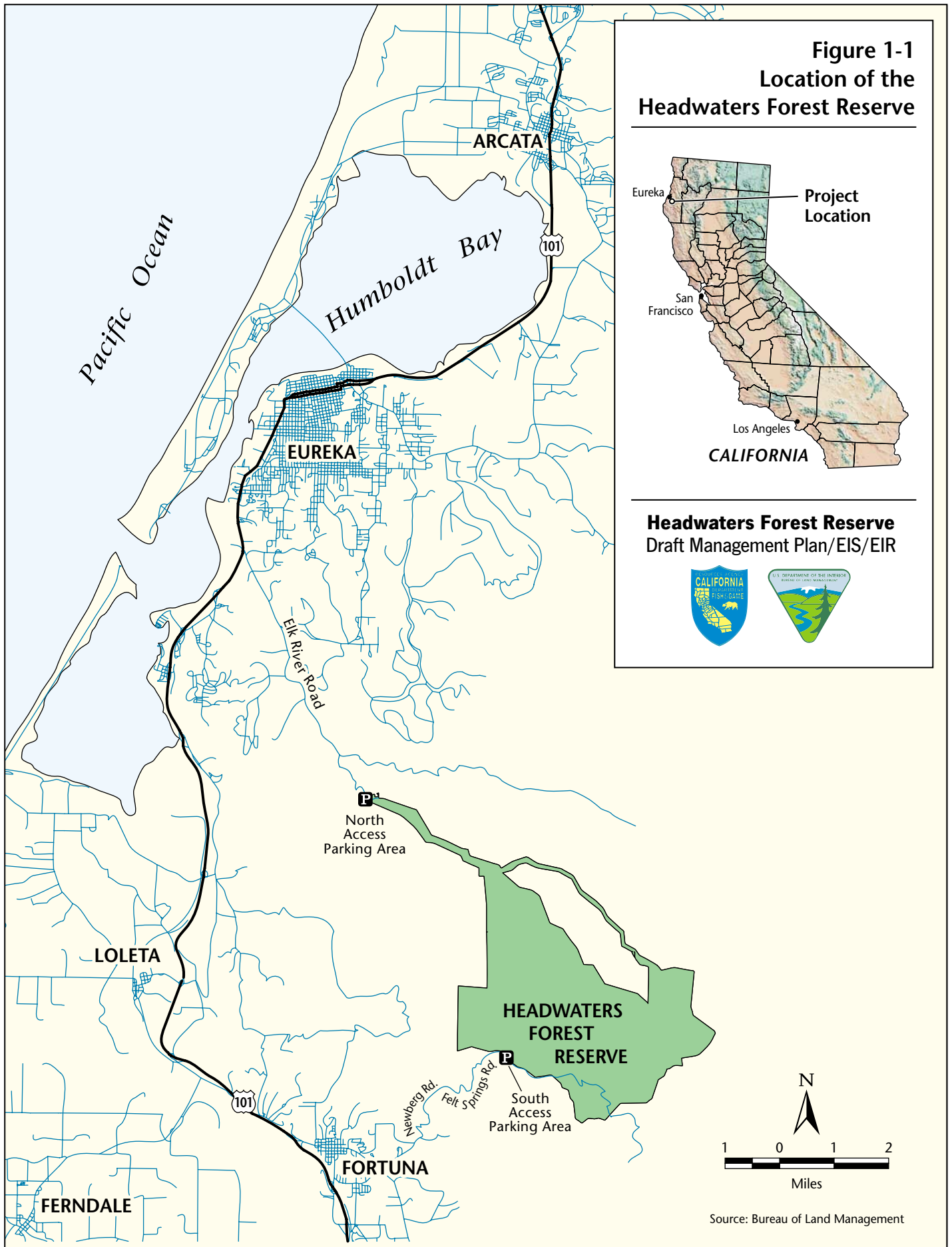
Planning Period and Plan Revision

This plan is intended to provide the basis for sound management of the Reserve for at least the next 10–15 years. Management must be adaptive, and stewardship of the Reserve will occur in

Figure 1-1
Location of the
Headwaters Forest Reserve



Headwaters Forest Reserve
Draft Management Plan/EIS/EIR



Source: Bureau of Land Management

the context of natural succession of forest characteristics and fish and wildlife use. The managing agencies recognize that the plan must be able to adapt to changing circumstances, such as new scientific information, new environmental laws, changing public demands, new management opportunities, or an addition to the Reserve (not foreseen at this time). For this reason, plan monitoring and evaluation schedules will be established as plan-implementation actions to ensure that the effects of planning decisions are tracked and reviewed on a regular basis. Evaluations will determine whether specific planning decisions remain valid or need to be revised.

A *plan amendment* normally involves changing or adding management decisions that do not change the fundamental character of the overall plan or any of its major elements. A *plan revision* is made in response to significant new information or issues that warrant a major change in the management direction of the plan or one of its major elements. BLM planning guidelines specify that plan revisions may be considered in the following instances:

- in response to an evaluation of consistency with new laws, regulations, and policies;
- upon determination that implementing the plan's decisions is not achieving the desired outcomes or meeting the plan's goals;
- when new science, data, or other information indicate a need to change decisions;
- upon determination that the plan no longer provides adequate management direction; or
- when new proposals or actions not evaluated in the plan are put forth.

Both plan amendments and plan revisions require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

NEPA/CEQA Provisions

General

NEPA and CEQA require that agencies proposing to plan or implement actions that may alter the environment evaluate potential environmental effects of such action and disclose them to decision makers and the public. If an action may result in significant adverse effects, the agency must identify feasible alternatives or planning/mitigation measures that can avoid or substantially lessen the identified impact.

This document is a joint resource management plan, environmental impact statement (EIS), and environmental impact report (EIR) that is required by NEPA and CEQA because significant adverse environmental effects could result from implementation of some land-use alternatives. This document both presents management goals and direction for long-term Reserve management and defines and evaluates alternative management approaches for specific issues identified in a public scoping process (Chapter 2). The foreseeable effects of each management alternative (Chapter 5) are identified and compared (Chapter 6).

This document is the draft version of the resource management plan/EIS/EIR, made available for public review and comment. As required by NEPA and CEQA, comments on this draft document will be reviewed, and the document will be modified accordingly. Once a final document is prepared and statutory appeal periods have transpired, the management plan will be formally adopted and implementation will begin.

Programmatic Aspects

This document addresses future management actions at a land-use planning and program level and indicates the extent and magnitude of several types of actions, such as watershed restoration, forest restoration, and development of recreation facilities, including a trail system. Implementation of these programs will entail several years. Individual projects will be formulated, designed in detail, reviewed for potential environmental effects, modified as warranted, and implemented. Any environmental documents that must be prepared for future projects will be tiered to this document. This document provides an assessment of project effects that are generally expected to occur with program implementation, but further site-specific analysis will be conducted as necessary.

Impact Baseline and No-Action Alternative: Interim Management

The baseline for assessing benefits and impacts in this document is the current condition of the Reserve under interim management policies established by BLM in March 1999 (Federal Register 1999). Future continuation of this baseline is one of the management alternatives considered for each of the various programs governed by this plan.

Process and Required Approvals to Achieve Final Plan and Final EIS/EIR

The draft version of this document was made available for a 90-day public review period. At the close of this period, all submitted comments were evaluated and revisions to the draft plan were made. Revisions that improve the ability of BLM to meet the established management goals were adopted, and this document represents the proposed resource management plan and final EIS/EIR. After allowance for final review of the plan/EIS/EIR, BLM will issue a record of decision for plan adoption and implementation, and DFG will issue a notice of determination to jointly adopt the plan.

Concurrent to this process, BLM has formally consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to obtain opinions about whether implementation of the plan is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the several listed threatened and endangered species. This proposed plan and final EIS/EIR embodies provisions to avoid species jeopardy and to minimize incidental take of those species.

Organization of This Document

This plan/EIS/EIR is composed of the following sections.

- Chapter 2, “Planning Framework,” describes the legal and regulatory framework within which the plan must be formulated, as well as planning issues identified during public scoping, and planning criteria (extent of analysis, range of alternatives, and planning assumptions).
- Chapter 3, “Affected Environment (Environmental Setting) and Interim Management of the Reserve,” is an analysis of current environmental conditions and the current management situation.

- Chapter 4, “Management Goals and Direction,” discusses the management goals and management policy for the several program areas addressed by the plan:
 - ❑ species management,
 - ❑ watershed and forest restoration,
 - ❑ research management,
 - ❑ fire management,
 - ❑ recreation access management,
 - ❑ cultural resource management,
 - ❑ management of areas having wilderness characteristics,
 - ❑ special areas designation and management,
 - ❑ resource monitoring and evaluation, and
 - ❑ management revenue.
- Chapter 5, “Management Alternatives,” is a set of 10 management issues and several alternatives for resolving each of them. The management agencies’ proposed alternatives are identified, as well as the alternatives for continuing the interim management policies.
- Chapter 6, “Environmental Consequences (Environmental Effects and Alternative Comparisons),” is an analysis of the effects, both beneficial and adverse, of implementation of the management goals and direction for each of the identified alternatives.
- Chapter 7, “Comments and Responses to Comments on the Draft Plan/EIS/EIR”, presents comments on the draft version of this document that were received during a public review period and states the sponsoring agencies’ responses to those comments.
- Chapter 8, “References Cited,” includes a complete bibliography of documents cited.

Following these main sections are several appendices that support analyses and conclusions of the planning process, as well as a list of preparers, individuals and organizations receiving notice of this document, and an index. Appendix N presents BLM’s proposed *supplemental rules* for management of the Reserve.